

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS DON KNABE AND  
MICHAEL ANTONOVICH

September 21, 2004

On Tuesday, September 14, 2004 the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) along with other airports in the region, had to close operations due to a faulty radio system that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) operates in Palmdale, CA. The radio failure occurred because the system was programmed to shut down without warning if technicians neglected to do a regular maintenance check that functions as a data purge. The systems requires periodic maintenance every 30 days and this did not happen.

As a result of this human error, countless lives were in jeopardy and at least two airplane accidents almost occurred during the outage. The FAA indicated about 600 flights were affected, including 150 flights that were cancelled and over 30,000 passengers were impacted. The outages prompted aviation authorities to ground and re-route airplanes that were suppose to fly through the Los Angeles Center Air Space, which is controlled by the Palmdale facility. The FAA has announced plans to install a new radio system for all 21 air traffic control centers in the country within a month. However, the Los Angeles Center's Palmdale facility backup radio system also failed last Tuesday.

(MORE)

MOTION

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ANTONOVICH	_____
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WE, THEREFORE MOVE, that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Administrative Officer to send correspondence to Ms. Marion C. Blakey, Director of the Federal Aviation Administration and Mr. Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary of Transportation, advising of our concerns and questions whether a new system can accommodate the expansion plans currently being considered for the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). Currently, LAX has approximately 1,900 flights a day to accommodate 61 million annual passengers (MAP), with Mayor Hahn's proposed expansion plan taking LAX up to 90 MAP, and upwards to 2,500 flights per day. We would call for hearings in Los Angeles County before a new system is installed to ensure that air traffic controllers can safely handle planes landing and taking off at the projected rate of one plane every 30 seconds. It should be noted that LAX capacity exceeded 68 MAP before September 11, 2001 and that the airport had reported 14 incursions during that level of operation. Passenger safety is of utmost concern to the Board of Supervisors.

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